

Last Days of Persecution

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Emperor, have always crowned with their manifest favours those who have their religion at heart and offer prayers to them for the perpetual safety of our invincible masters, we have thought it well to approach your immortal Majesty and to ask that the Christians, who for years have been impious and do not cease to be so, may be finally suppressed and transgress no longer, by their wicked and innovating cult, the respect that is owing to the gods.

" This result would be attained if their impious rites were forbidden and suppressed by your divine and eternal decree, and if they were compelled to practise the; cult of the gods, your congeners, and pray to them on behalf of your eternal and incorruptible Majesty. This would clearly be to the advantage and profit of all your subjects."

Kusebius records two replies of the Emperor to petitions of this character. One is contained in a letter to his nephew, Sabinus, and relates to N {corn cclia. The other is a document copied by Kusebius from a bronze tablet set up on a column in Tyre. Maxim'm expatiates at great length on the debt which men owe to the gods, and especially to Jupiter, the presiding deity of Tyre, for the ordered succession of the seasons, and for keeping within their appointed bounds the overwhelming forces of Nature, If there have been calamities and cataclysms, to what else, he asks, can they be attributed than to the "vain and pestilential errors of the villainous Christians?"¹ Those who have apostatised and have been delivered from their blindness are like people who have escaped from a furious storm or have been